The Arts in Education

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The Arts in Education

Background

This statement on the arts in education was developed at the request of Manitoba Education and Youth as an initial step in renewing provincial curricula for the arts. In preparing this statement, the arts educators who comprised the project team drew on current research in arts education and reviewed arts curricula from Canadian and international jurisdictions.

The Department would like to acknowledge the work of the following people in preparing this statement:

Coralie Bryant	Alliance for Arts Education in Manitoba
Liz Coffman	University of Manitoba
Joe Halas	Winnipeg School Division
Rae Harris	The Winnipeg Art Gallery
Alan Janzen	Private Consultant
Dr. Francine Morin	University of Manitoba
Lynda Toews	Researcher/Writer
Dr. Joan Walters	Private Consultant

The *Arts in Education* statement and the response form may be downloaded from the Manitoba Education and Youth website at http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/ks4/cur/arts.

Introduction

The Cultural Significance of the Arts

The arts are vital to human existence. Throughout history, the arts have played a significant role in human life. They transmit culture across time and place, often serving as the only record of past civilizations.

Artistic experience is also an integral part of our present collective human existence, contributing to personal, social, economic, cultural, and civic aspects of our lives. In cultures around the world, life's most important events—weddings, funerals, birthdays, graduations, religious holidays, and community occasions—are observed and celebrated through the arts. Whether we create works of art or enter imaginatively into the creative expressions of others, we experience the power of art to illuminate and extend our human experience.

"All of the arts...are fundamental resources through which the world is viewed, meaning is created, and the mind is developed."
– Elliot W. Eisner

The arts comprise a rich body of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and provide unique avenues to perception and expression. The ideas, feelings, and cultural/historical references inherent in the arts contribute to our understanding of the world. Through the arts, we can reflect, interpret, and shape our own and others' experience and view of the world. In the process we extend our understanding of ourselves, deepen our empathy with others, and bring meaning and a greater range of emotional response to our lives. The arts also enable us to respond to social issues, consider diverse views and possibilities, and create imagined realities.

The Arts in Education

Artistic literacy contributes to success in learning and enriches students' lives individually and as members of the local and global community. Learning through the arts enables students to rely on imaginative and creative processes, promotes open-ended, non-linear thinking, and encourages understanding and feeling mediated through the senses. It requires openness to new ideas, connections, and ways of seeing—a spirit of inquiry and exploration that leads to independent learning. An arts education provides balance in the overall school curriculum by developing many ways of knowing and by enhancing understanding of our cultures and ourselves.

The individual arts (music, dance, drama, and the visual arts) are characterized by unique forms, each employing a variety of media. Students require substantive instruction and active participation in the arts to gain knowledge, skills, and understanding in one or more of the arts. Arts education is not limited to performance and artistic production; the process of learning about and through the arts also involves exploration and reflection, historical and cultural studies, and the search for value and meaning.

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Goals of Arts Education

What Are the Goals of Arts Education?

The essential goals of all arts education are to develop artistic perception, creative expression, historical and cultural understanding, and aesthetic valuing:*

- **Artistic perception** is the processing of sensory information through elements unique to the arts.

  The arts use both verbal and non-verbal languages composed of words, images, sounds, and movement. Artistic literacy involves learning to heighten sensory awareness of our surroundings and learning how to "read" the languages of the arts.

- **Creative expression** involves communicating thoughts, feelings, and ideas through various artistic modes.

  By learning to use various forms of representation students become "multi-literate"—able to "say" more things in more ways. There is no exact linguistic equivalent to a musical composition, painting, dance movement, or dramatic performance. At times, we need the arts to express our most profound human experiences: "When words are no longer adequate, when our passion is greater than we are usually able to express in the usual manner, people turn to art" (Murray Sidlin, as cited in California Department of Education, 1996, 8).

"True creativity often starts where language ends."
– Arthur Koestler

- **Historical and cultural understanding** means appreciating the arts in the time and place of their creation and understanding how the arts both reflect and influence cultures.

  Through the arts, we understand, preserve, and transmit our own culture, history, and identity. In addition, we learn to understand and empathize with people from other cultural backgrounds and groups (racial, religious, age, gender, and language) and to share common knowledge and experience. The arts can help students become more deeply aware of their own lives and cultures and create a larger, more conscious context for the plethora of media images, sounds, and messages that surround us.

Through the arts "one can hear civilizations speak through the ages and understand the connections of past lives to present and future ones" (California Department of Education, 1996, 6).

- **Aesthetic valuing** involves responding to and reflecting upon what is being "said" in the languages of the arts.

  By analyzing, interpreting, and making informed judgements in and through the arts, students develop critical thinking skills that help them to understand and analyze what they value. Aesthetic valuing includes both individual responses and the social and cultural contexts of those responses. The arts enable students to become part of a human tradition in the search for meaning.

"For the soul, beauty is the quality in things that invites absorption and contemplation, that lures the heart into profound imagination."
– Thomas Moore

* These terms are used by the California Department of Education (1996, 6-7).

The Value of Arts Education

"The arts facilitate joyful learning as no other process can, simply because they build on the innate individual and collective desire to express profound ideas in dance, song, story or picture."
– Walter Pitman

"Socrates, Michelangelo, Emily Dickenson, Emily Carr—these four disruptive, aggravating and magnificent human icons remind us that we must indeed invite challenge, discomfort, and a healthy amount of confusion—that we must indeed take risks in allowing the arts and artists into our lives, and into that most important facet of our lives, education".
– John Murrell

Why Do We Need Arts Education?

The arts, taught with the essential goals in mind, contribute unique learning experiences that benefit students as individuals and as members of society. The imaginative, exploratory, active learning inherent in the arts enhances cognition, engages attention, motivates learners, and connects them to content emotionally, physically, and personally. Learning in and through the arts produces excitement, joy, and surprise: "The arts teach that surprise is the reward of the imagination" (Eisner, 2002, 4). Experience and research shows that the arts help enliven and energize the school environment, inspire confidence, help to reach hard-to-reach students, and keep them in school (Upitis and Smithrim, 2002; Fiske, 1999).

The arts accomplish these educational goals in various ways:

- The arts **release the imagination.** We use the imagination, or the "mind's eye," to generate innovative ideas, to react spontaneously, and to extend ideas: "The role of the imagination is to awaken, to disclose the ordinarily unseen, unheard, unexpected" (Greene, 1995, 28). By fostering "possibility thinking," the arts also help students to be flexible in formulating questions, solving problems, managing change, and empathizing with others.
- The arts **awaken the senses.** In developing the senses, the arts help us become more aware of and sensitive to all aspects of our surroundings in the constructed and the natural world. Through the senses, students engage with their surroundings, learn and recall concepts, and communicate their understanding: "Thinking is mediated through many sensory forms: visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic, for example. These sensory forms attain their most articulate expression in art, music and dance" (Eisner, 2002, 2). Sensory awareness of our surroundings is particularly important in a world increasingly dominated by technology. It also enables us to improve and preserve our environment.
- The arts **engage the emotions.** Emotions are the essence of the arts and a vital part of learning. Educators know that "students are more likely to recall information when it is embedded in an emotional context since neural circuitry is enhanced through emotions" (Daniel Goleman, cited in Rettig and Rettig, 1999, 21). Affective education involves learning to recognize and express emotion, and to include feeling with thinking and doing. Participation in the arts helps students give form and meaning to ideas and emotions.

"Creative children look twice, listen for smells, dig deeper, build dream castles, get from behind locked doors, have a ball, plug in the sun, get into and out of deep water, sing in their own key."
– Paul Torrance

- The arts **stimulate creative thinking.** Creativity includes fluency in generating ideas, flexibility or divergent thinking, originality, elaboration, and the ability to see in multiple perspectives and imagine multiple solutions. The wonder of creativity can foster "an understanding of ironic uncertainty…, which aligns totally disparate ideas to find new answers" (Pitman, 1998, 23). The arts develop students' abilities to observe, express, invent, organize thoughts and feelings, assess critically, and think in predictable and unpredictable ways. Through the arts, students develop the capacity to think within the possibilities and limitations of a medium.

"All we can do, I believe, is to cultivate multiple ways of seeing and multiple dialogues in a world where nothing stays the same."
– Maxine Greene

- The arts **involve multiple modes of learning**—that is, many ways of thinking, knowing, and communicating. In his Theory of Multiple Intelligences, Howard Gardner (1999) suggests that human intelligence has more forms than linguistic/verbal and logical/ mathematical, the most common focuses in schooling. Other forms include visual/spatial, musical/rhythmic, bodily/kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalist, and existential intelligences. The various arts engage these multiple intelligences profoundly.

- The arts **develop independent thinking and meaning-making skills.** The arts teach us that the world is complex and open to interpretation and that knowledge and meaning are humanly constructed. Through the arts, students learn to construct and discover meaning and they learn to recognize the validity of multiple interpretations of a work. They learn that "all perspectives are contingent, no one's picture is complete" (Greene, 1995, 82). In addition, they discover that the arts often create tension and dissonance that lead to discomfort or surprise, or to resolution and understanding. Grappling with these complexities in the arts fosters a capacity to strive for meaning and to live with life's paradox and ambiguity.

- The arts **develop critical understanding of the mass media,** including a conscious awareness of their intent and techniques and the relationships between media, message, author/artist, and audience. Artistic literacy fosters a critical approach toward communications media, a skill that is increasingly essential in our fast-paced, media-driven, information-saturated, commercial, and technocratic society. It enables students to view and use technology and information as tools to extend understanding, rather than being unwittingly controlled by them. The arts help us to "resist the forces that press people into passivity and bland acquiescence" (Greene, 1995, 135). Arts education encourages students to observe, reflect, and make judgements about what they value in the context of society.

"The arts are strong antidotes to our most dangerous postmodern vulnerability, confusing information and wisdom."
– Philip F. Hall

- The arts provide opportunities to **develop local and global community, to transcend social and cultural boundaries, and to honour diversity.** The arts encourage students to develop their own "voice" and to participate more fully in their schools and communities. Imagination, released by the arts, enables us to contemplate what it might be like to be another person, and therefore, to empathize with others. "It may well be the imaginative capacity that allows us to experience empathy with different points of view, even with interests apparently at odds with ours" (Greene, 1995, 31). This empathy can bridge language and cultural differences and encourage connections both within and between communities. The relevance of the arts in today's multicultural landscape and global community cannot be overstated.

Instructional Approaches to Arts Education

"Breaking down walls—erasing divisions—means imagining new wholes, seeing relationships which reach over and through the walls. It means a different pedagogy. Ultimately it means a different conception of knowledge and a different manner of learning"
– Silver Donald Cameron

How Do We Teach the Arts?

The arts, with their unique contributions to learning, require distinct ways of thinking about teaching. Prominent educators in the arts advocate a constructivist approach to learning and teaching because it is consistent with the purposes of arts education. Curriculum organization models that allow for both in-depth experiences in the individual arts and interdisciplinary connections provide the richest opportunities for learning.

Constructivist Learning

Research into learning has moved us beyond the transmission model of education, in which the teacher's task was viewed as imparting knowledge or skills, to a constructivist model of learning. The basic premise of constructivism—that learners actively construct knowledge rather than passively receiving it—is a notion that few educators today would challenge. The belief that reality is not found outside us, but rather is created or constructed within us is central to this approach. Knowing, however, is not only an individual construction, but also a social construction influenced by our interactions with others, by communicative forms, and by culture. Today, knowledge is defined as "temporary, developmental, socially and culturally mediated" (Brooks and Brooks, 1993, vii).

This constructivist perspective is central to learning in the arts and the guiding principle for meaning making in the classroom. Learning and teaching in the arts is characterized by authentic experience, collaborative discourse, reflection, open-ended challenges, problem solving, broad ideas and questions, and artistic inquiry.

Such an understanding of constructivist learning places a unique responsibility on teachers:

> Made aware of ourselves as questioners, as meaning makers, as persons engaged in constructing and reconstructing realities with those around us, we may communicate to students the notion that reality is multiple perspectives and that the construction of it is never complete, that there is always more. (Greene, 1995, 131)

The constructivist model of learning has instructional implications such as the following:

"When a student takes ownership by directing his or her learning in terms of what is personally meaningful, it is much more likely the student will be able to store the concept in memory, and then to retrieve the information or concept later."

– Perry R. Rettig and Janet L. Rettig

- **The teacher as facilitator:** Constructivist teachers assume the roles of facilitator, co-learner, guide, and mentor. They de-emphasize lecturing and telling, and encourage students' active engagement in establishing and pursuing their own learning objectives (Noddings, 1995, 116) within the structure of school programming. Learning often begins with the ideas and interests of students, with the teacher introducing concepts and strategies to help students explore and communicate their ideas and thoughts through a given discipline. While teachers provide substantive curricular instruction, learner-centred education also requires students to direct, reflect on, and assess their own learning.
- **Active participation:** Students actively participate in their own learning through play, interaction, and experimentation rather than passively absorbing information. Active involvement and exploration in a supportive setting encourages students to take risks in their learning, and helps them to feel comfortable learning from their mistakes, as well as from their successes.
- **Learning through inquiry:** Inquiry-based teaching employs carefully designed broad questions that challenge learners to use critical thinking, problem solving, self-directed learning, and collaboration, as well as both discipline-specific and interdisciplinary knowledge. The result of the inquiry, such as a painting or a musical composition, involves a creative process that is just as important as the product.
- **Social interaction:** Learning is a social activity. It is intimately associated with our connection with others, especially teachers and other students. Educators know that "it isn't enough for students to be in a stimulating environment—they have to help create it and directly interact with it. They have to have many opportunities to tell *their* stories, not just listen to the teacher's stories" (Rettig and Rettig, 1999, 21). Interaction, conversation, and the application of knowledge about culture are central to developing a constructivist environment in the classroom.

Curriculum Organization

"Arts education should serve as a model for education, not the other way around."
– Elliot W. Eisner

Educators organize and implement an arts curriculum in various ways, including **independent** and **integrated** models of study. Both approaches are important to the overall goals of arts programming and need to be employed, when appropriate, to meet student' needs in diverse learning contexts.

With the **independent** model, educators teach the arts as independent disciplines (visual art, music, dance, or drama), each comprising a distinct body of knowledge and skills. Because the individual arts represent distinct "ways of knowing," each of the arts makes a significant and unique contribution to students' learning and development. Accordingly, "artistic endeavours *require* that students go directly to the essence of the discipline" (Cameron, 2001, 8). Learning is achieved through the variety of methods and media inherent in a specific discipline.

"Teachers of mathematics have brought new meaning to their subject by playing the fugues of Johann Sebastian Bach. Geography and history lessons have been enlivened through the exploration of the visual arts and music of an era and region, providing as profound an understanding as that which can be found in the study of maps and constitutional documents."
– Walter Pitman

The arts are interdisciplinary by their very nature, however, and provide unique opportunities to understand concepts and processes from other disciplines in new ways. Linking the content of arts programming to other areas of learning ensures that the arts do not become isolated from the general body of knowledge in the school curriculum.

With the **integrated** model, educators teach the individual arts in combination with each other and/or in conjunction with other curricula. The arts enrich and are enriched by each other and other subjects because of the deeper insights that can be gained through integration:

> The arts play an integral role in integrating wholes and parts, and it is how literature, visual art, drama, dance, and music interact with science, social studies, math, and the language arts and support learning about life skills, concept and themes that is the goal. (Cornett and Smithrim, 2001, 59)

When true integration occurs, teachers focus on achieving the learning outcomes of each discipline. Learning is interdependent, in that no individual subject is used solely to support learning in other subjects. The integrated study reinforces meaningful connections within and across disciplines. The best examples of integrated study occur when teachers collaborate to develop and implement arts-rich programming and experiences that permeate school life.

The instructional implications of organizing curricula in and through the arts include the following:

- **Teachers' knowledge of the arts:** To teach any of the four arts disciplines effectively, teachers need the appropriate knowledge and skills, which can be acquired in various ways, including specialist education, pre-service or in-service teacher programs, and other professional development opportunities. Allocation of adequate time for teaching the individual arts is also essential.
- **Multiple modes of inquiry:** The individual arts facilitate different forms of thinking and provide various expressive options. Students need opportunities to learn about, explore, and express their ideas through a variety of modes, such as image, sound, movement, and language.
- **Connections to students' experience:** Developing a meaningful, integrated curriculum begins with identifying ideas and examples relevant to the students' lives and cultures. For example, "students can reference their teen pop-culture (to which they feel kinship if not outright ownership), but acknowledge and approach its forms critically, seeking its function and value" (Addison and Burgess, 2000, 289).
- **Curricular connections:** Teaching the arts in conjunction with other subjects allows teachers to make meaningful connections across the curriculum. A concept or theme such as "pattern," for example, can be explored in any of the arts, but can also be connected to every other subject.
- **Interdisciplinary collaboration:** Teachers can work together to find commonalities among subject areas and plan learning experiences that encourage students to explore and express connections between the arts and one or more other subjects. Planning and teaching in the arts improve when teachers collaborate with other teachers, administrators, librarians, community artists, and other resource persons. Cooperation among adults also models collaborative learning for students.

"The richer a person's experiences, the more connections are possible, and when the arts are interwoven with life, additional dimensions of understanding and expression are made possible."
— Claudia E. Cornett and Katharine Smithrim

Higher levels of integration will be more appropriate in some learning contexts than others, but some degree of integration should be part of all arts programming. Conversely, integration must also include an appropriate amount of independent instruction.

Conclusion

"I wait for us to take a big unanimous breath, to welcome in the fresh air, the entire fresh air of arts in education, and education in the arts– art-infused education, this very ancient and still very new concept, which is fuelled by restlessness, dissatisfaction, secretiveness, and stubbornness, even as it leads to discovery, fulfillment, sharing and community."
– John Murrell

Imagine an education for all Manitoba students that encompasses rich, comprehensive, and powerful experiences in the arts. Students who are literate in the arts are able to participate in society in intelligent ways by bringing sensitivity, imagination, inspiration, and creativity to human endeavours.

Canadian calls for reform in arts education remind us that

> the habits of mind and understandings developed in arts education serve both to help our children make a life worth living and help develop highly desirable characteristics for citizenry and employability in the 21st century: creative thinking, decision making, responsibility, teamwork skills, adaptability, leadership, working with diversity, seeing things in the mind's eye, and knowing how to learn. (The National Symposium in Arts Education, 2001, 5)

Through arts education we cultivate new generations of artists and artistically literate citizens whose insights, creativity, and values will continue to enrich human life.

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Manitoba Education and Youth
The Arts in Education
Draft Statement, October 2003
Response Form

Background information of Reviewer(s)

This is a review by:

___an individual ___a group of educators ___an educational partner organization

Please indicate arts areas represented by the respondent(s) [if applicable]:

___visual art ___dance ___drama ___music

___all of the above

NAME/NAME OF GROUP:_____

OF REVIEWERS IN GROUP [if applicable]_____

ADDRESS:_____

TELEPHONE:_____FAX:_____EMAIL:_____

Please indicate role/affiliation:

____ Classroom Teacher: What grade(s)/course(s) do you teach?_____

____ Arts Education Specialist

____ Parent Organization

____ Professional Organization

____ University/College Faculty

____ Cultural Organization

____ School Board Member

____ Parent

____ School Administrator

____ Student

____ Other (Please specify) _____

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The Arts in Education

Introduction

1. The introductory statements in *The Arts in Education* (page 3) provide a strong rationale for including the arts as part of the school curriculum.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree	No Comment
1	2	3	4	5	☐

Please provide comments and/or examples to support your rating.

2. The essential **Goals of Arts Education** (page 4) – artistic perception, creative expression, historical and cultural understanding, and aesthetic valuing – should be reflected in Manitoba's updated curricula for the arts.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree	No Comment
1	2	3	4	5	☐

Please provide comments and/or examples to support your rating.

3. The **Value of Arts Education** (pages 5-7) articulates the key role of the arts in learning experiences that engage students intellectually and emotionally. These are principles with which I/we agree.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree	No Comment
1	2	3	4	5	☐

Please provide comments and/or examples to support your rating.

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4. **Constructivist Learning** (pages 7-8) describes an approach to teaching and learning that should be central to Manitoba's updated curricula for the arts.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree	No Comment
1	2	3	4	5	☐

Please provide comments and/or examples to support your rating.

5. **Curriculum Organization** (pages 9-10) recognizes the importance of *learning in and about the arts* (the curricula identify learning outcomes specific to each of the arts) and of *learning through the arts* (the curricula make connections between the arts disciplines and with other subject areas). This model of organization is one that I/we agree should be addressed in the updated curricula.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree	No Comment
1	2	3	4	5	☐

Please provide comments and/or examples to support your rating.

6. Overall, the *Arts in Education* statement provides a coherent direction to guide the renewal of arts curricula in Manitoba.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree	No Comment
1	2	3	4	5	☐

Please provide comments and/or examples to support your rating.

The Arts in Education

7. Please include any additional comments and suggestions regarding the *Arts in Education* statement. (Please note page/paragraph reference and attach additional pages if necessary.)

This response form may be downloaded from the Manitoba Education and Youth website at
http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/ks4/cur/arts

Please return your response by November 30, 2003 to:

Anne Longston, Director, Program Development Branch
Manitoba Education and Youth
W120-1970 Ness Avenue, Winnipeg MB R3J 0Y9
or
Fax: (204) 945-5060.

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